

**NORTH KARELIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

Design Programme

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## **DESIGNING A STAND FOR LAUNCHING A PRODUCT TO AN INTERNATIONAL MARKET**

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Abstract,

Companies have a need to differentiate from competitors. The more competitors, the harder it is to be original. Having an attractive product alone is not enough for customers. Today, product qualities require functionality but also something customers can identify with. Design is about making products easy to use but also breathing life into new products. It is especially important to give the right image from the start for customers. Plasthill Oy decided to use a designer to ascertain customers' interest. The designer was employed to create a stand for Plasthill's new product which was to be launched at the international consumers goods fair, Ambiente.

In order to continuously produce beneficial work to the company, Plasthill Oy assigned the work to me. With this co-operation, using a student company would have the chance to explore the benefits design creates without risking large investments.

The work for the employer was to design and assemble a functional stand that presents a natural image of the product. The employment started 15.11.2010 and finished on 15.2.2011. The fair, located in Frankfurt, is the largest international consumer goods fair in the world. Factors to be taken into consideration were the business target group in the fair and the strict schedule.

After realizing the stand, reading literature about the marketing part of the launching process took place. The questionnaires adapted the feedback gathered on the stand and from the employer to confirm if improvements suggested would be beneficial in the future.

The stand which was created, was the second most prevalent, chosen from four different options. From that we can make a conclusion that the design could be improved with minor changes but overall the designed result was functional and satisfied the customers' needs.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The launching goal is to sell a physical product, a service, or an idea to a customer. The customer can be the end-user, a retailer or another company funding a smaller one. What is important is not who the customer is, but how to approach each one. Traditionally, products in Finland were done when needed, and advertising as a part of marketing has been received suspiciously. Nowadays, surviving without marketing is impossible and that is where branding shows its importance. Branding differentiates from others when there are tens of companies offering similar products to customers. If one cannot compete with low production costs or be the best in ones field technologically, then one has to be different and have something extra that people are willing to pay for. This extra can be the soul and personality of the product, and now we are talking about the brand and design. People want experiences that they remember. A product with a package will not offer that, but a product which has a history, story, and future not forgetting function does as Sounio (2010) observes.

In Finland, the brand is important but it becomes vital when entering a highly competitive international market. There is an increasing number of companies in Finland who want to enter larger markets because Finland is offering a limited amount of purchasing power with its five million people. Just the eagerness to enter new markets is not enough. As the article in the newspaper Karjalainen (15.4.2011) stated: "in a research done on North Karelia entrepreneurs, one-third lack the knowledge in international business behavior." That combined with poor branding explains the partially small amount of internationally successful Finnish companies. To succeed, a face lift to the image is not enough. Branding means adjusting to the market and therefore getting more interested customers. It does not require a large budget, even though it is possible to invest heavily. By investing in a designer who can make the company's brand visible through design, the company is investing in its own image that customers will see.

Customers in general are suspicious towards new products, and companies will have to win customers over with the use of clever advertising and branding.

That is why it is especially important to have the right kind of image for the product. This starts with the product launch.

Traditionally, Finnish companies have not invested in designers, and design is seen as economical for only large international companies. Students can introduce companies to design with low investments and make the company see possibilities rather than threats in design. With this argument, the company Plasthill Oy decided to invest in a student to design a stand for the International Ambiente Fair. In the stand Kupilka Oy would be presented. By getting custom design for the stand, the product Kaarna® is expecting a large number of interested customers to visit the stand. This will then create more contacts to secure product availability in the shops. Plasthill Oy's and Kupilka Oy's cooperation is understandable, since they both are using the same material on their products and they both share the same green thinking ideology.

My job for the company was to design the brand of the launched product and to create graphics that support the desired image for the stand at the world's largest consumer goods fair, Ambiente. The annual retail fair is organized in Frankfurt, Germany. After analyzing the fair's success and the impact of the design, two small qualitative questionnaires were made to understand how the design outcome satisfied Plasthill Oy. Entering the market or creating a stand for a certain company in the future will be improved upon. The knowledge ascertained during the project will be useful for the design process in the future.

The project gives an opportunity to study how new products are launched into the international markets. This will help to understand the whole phenomenon behind the process. It is important to think about what has to be taken into consideration. Knowledge about the plastic industry's injection molding process is familiar through a family member's company, but the field of launching a new product to the market was unfamiliar to me. Comprehending the company's needs and designing a functional outcome in the given time was a challenge to overcome. Managing the project nurtures management skills in the future.

## **2 FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Company and the product**

This thesis studies product launching as a phenomenon and from a designer's point of view. This is possible due to a work ordered by Plasthill Oy. Plasthill Oy is a Finnish company founded in 1996, doing plastic injection molding technical and household products, e.g. screw caps, seals, plastic bowls, and water cans. The company is the producer of Kareline® natural fiber composites as well as being a producer and designer. Plasthill Oy has green values, which is shown by using green electricity, doing charity work, recycling, and using and producing natural fiber composite biomaterial in their products; as in the product to be launched. Natural fiber composites add qualities, e.g. stabilizing and adding weight and heat insulation to the product (Luonnonkuitukomposiitti: Kilpailuetua materiaalista ja muotoilusta).

Having a new product made Plasthill Oy choose to invest into the visual look of the stand for Ambiente 2011. Here, the new product Kaarna® service tray (Figure 1) was introduced to retailers around the world. The company's main objective was to find German distributors for their new product. Plasthill Oy's success comes from the individuality in the products as well as the products' high quality. What makes this product different is the soft wooden touch, while still being dishwasher friendly and the fact that the product is more ecological by using leftovers from the Finnish wood industry to fill roughly half of the products' plastic. The other company using the same stand is Kupilka Oy, a Finnish company making camping cutlery products using only natural fiber composites as materials.





Figure 1. Kaarna-service tray.

The stand is designed for the consumer goods fair Ambiente. Plasthill Oy decided that the stand supplies are designed and produced in Finland and then sent to the exhibition space before the fair. This enables confirming with their own eyes the elements are of the right quality before assembling them. This also forbears investing in expensive Ambiente fair stand designers. At the Ambiente stand elements were assembled within one day. Working as an exhibition representative on the stand gave an opportunity to get oral feedback about the designed stand. Filling paper forms were out of the question since only a few people would have the time or motivation to complete questionnaires.

Plasthill Oy wants to promote Kaarna to foreign countries, especially to the German market, where they believe they would have demand for the product.

Cooperation between Kupilka and Plasthill is natural since they are both using the same rare biomaterial in their products and they both share rather similar values.

## **2.2 Action plan**

The largest framework for this thesis consists of studying the international product launch as a phenomenon in society from the design point of view (Figure 2). This requires research about the subject from the Internet as well as exploring literature to support the design process. Earlier, personal experience about visiting and constructing the fair stands was a valuable source of information and will help the thesis process. The goal for the thesis is to understand the phenomenon involved. This will happen through understanding the whole process of launching and designing the product and being able to face customer expectations in the given time and to process the experiences from Ambiente.

Communication with the customer, Plasthill Oy, functions when both personal and the company representatives needs are being noticed and understood. This helps to avoid obstacles, e.g. differences in opinions in the stand layout, colors or budgeting. Communication in these situations is the key to finding a solution that will satisfy both yet have the best possible outcome. Knowing one's weaknesses and strengths will make asking questions easier when needed and helps keep one's mind when required, especially in the situation when the employer belongs to the family.

The goal was to have a successful stand for Ambiente. From the research, design and realization process, what should be learned is vital design wise for securing the product Kaarna's success. Factors that influence the thesis are ones the design process and different stages of the design process. People involved in the thesis process, as well as personal opinions, observations and questions had an active role of founding factors that influence the design of the

stand or understanding the product launch as a phenomenon. Constructive feedback from the employer throughout the thesis process provided the key factors that allow the goals to be achieved. Several questions need to be asked before designing. What does launching a product as a phenomenon mean? Who is the project's customer and the product's end consumer? Who will be visiting the fair? What will attract the customer, consumer and exhibition visitors? Having answers to the previous questions allows creating the right attraction for the targeted group. All the questions must be remembered, since product launching will be to different international cultures. Their preferences and habits must be considered in all actions.

By applying a framework to other parts, they are fulfilled and understood differently. The possibilities and requirements are seen, and successful results can be formed. This means forming the functional stand on time and gathering feedback about the stand and other design factors for future development. The thesis process gives a great amount of professional knowledge about the work as a designer and will enhance professionalism in future employment.

## Framework

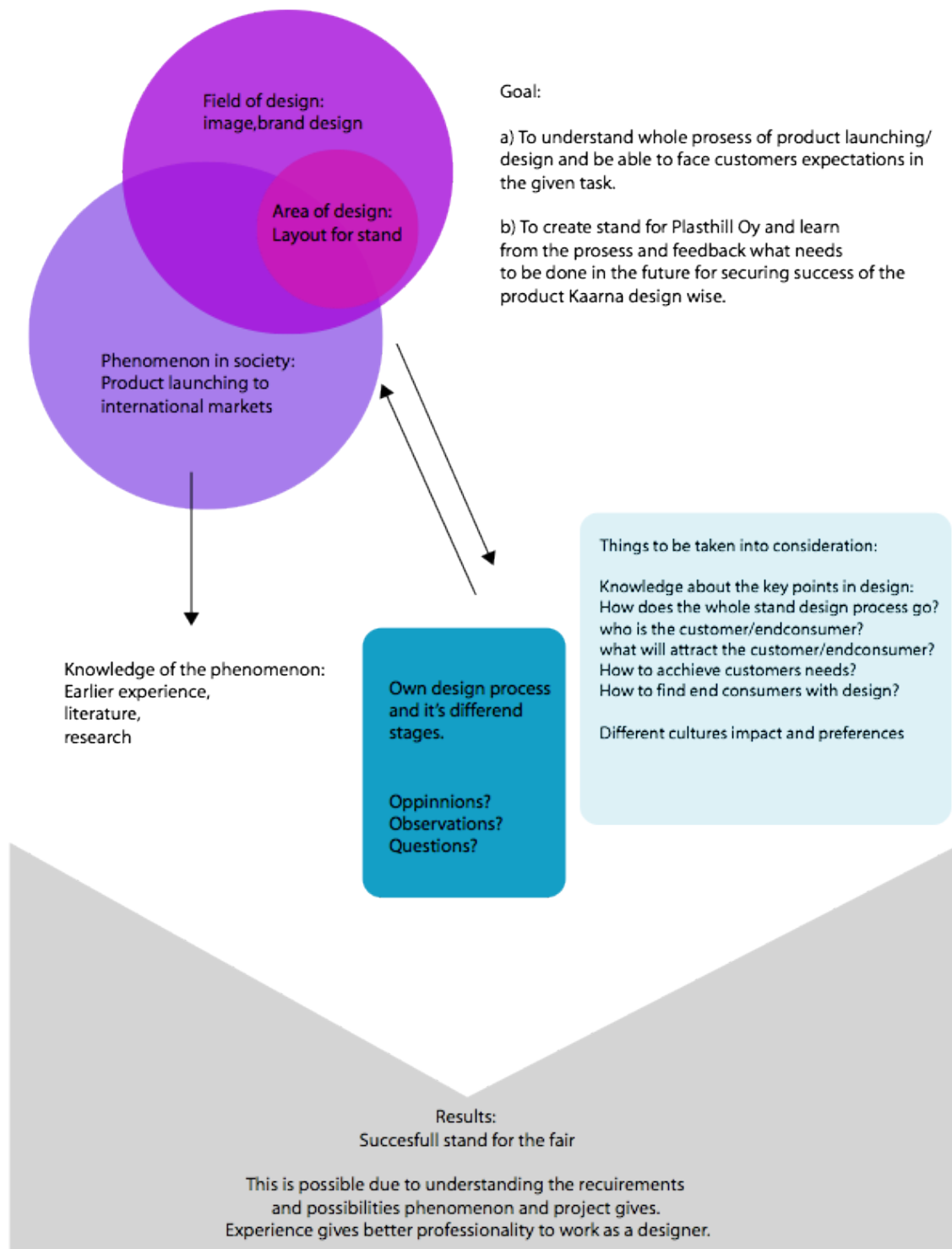


Figure 2. Framework

## 2.3 Timetable

The first timetable started on 15.11.2010, when Plasthill Oy agreed to employ a design student to create the stand for Ambiente. The first timetable terminated at the Ambiente fair where the actual employment was finished (Figure 3). The timetable was followed with another timetable until the thesis presentation. The second time period was reserved for analyzing the feedback from the Ambiente fair and immersing the phenomenon as well as planning and realizing the questionnaire. The timetable was formed in this way, since Plasthill Oy required me to work everyday so I was able to finish the stand on time. Observing the product launch in real life assists in understanding the entirety of the process before writing about the subject. Only that enables one to see mistakes, corrections, and behaviors on where they actually take place, learning from them, and being able to ask the correct questions about the questionnaire.

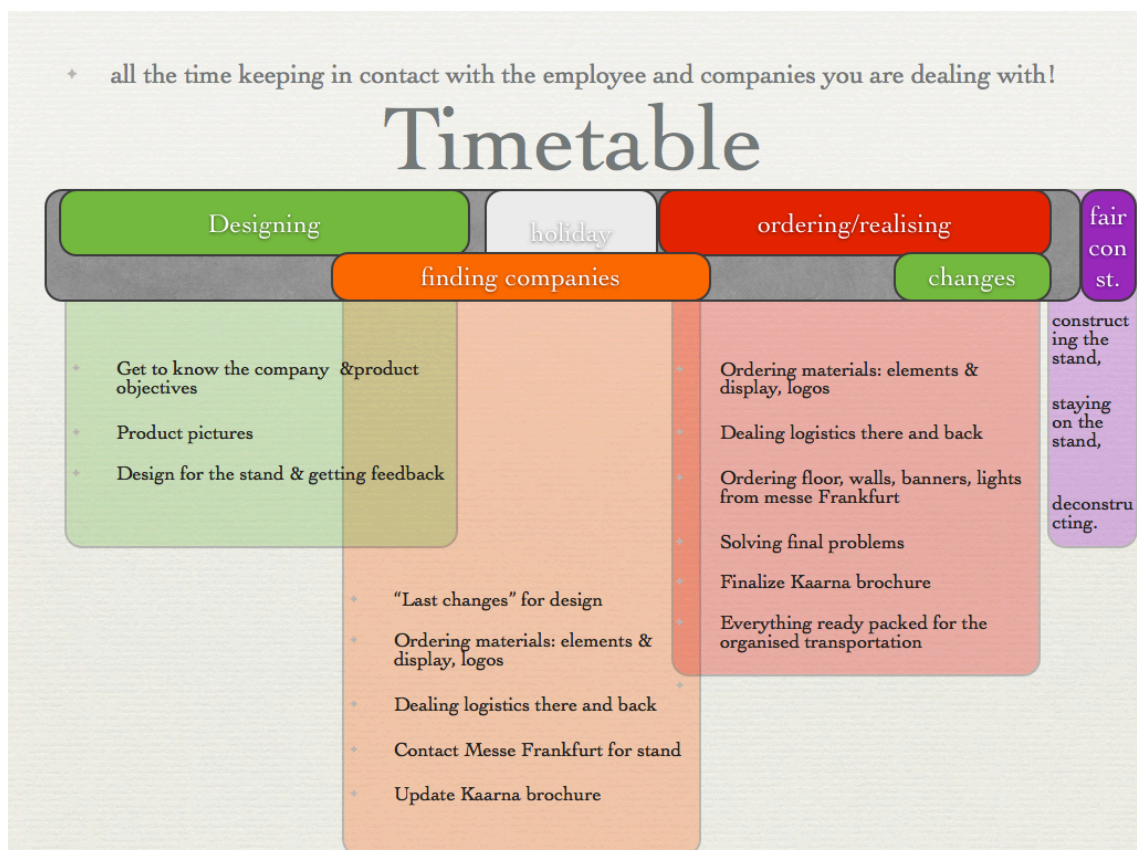


Figure 3. Timetable

### 3 LAUNCHING A PRODUCT

According to Rope (1999,11), “For a company launching to the markets means taking a new or renewed product (seemed as new) to the market with aim to succeed commercially.” Rope appoints that launching is the decision and action process followed by product development. The process includes planning and completion to get to the markets, which is ensured by a constant follow-up. Rope contemplates launching from the marketing point of view. According to that, the plans should answer the following questions. “When will launching happen? What target group(s) is (are) chosen? What kind of marketing strategy will be chosen? How will launching be realized?” (Rope 1999,16)

The product launching phenomenon in society unites the manufacturing, marketing and the design fields. Manufacturing ascertains a product is functional and simple to produce. Marketing finds out the possible customer base and the price the product can cost to be profitable as well as optimizing the sales strategy. The design secures the product and attracts customers at first glance as well as through the whole product circle. This means assuring the product does not only function but for example with aesthetics eases life or in some other way improves life quality. The launching of all three needs to work seamlessly in order to be able to locate the product to the correct customer segment. For example, to be able to have the product successful in the low price category, the packaging design must also present the wanted images, and the production must be able to implement wanted solutions with low costs. The product itself can be a physical product, for example an eco charity water bottle. A service can e.g. be a spa experience. The same factors apply when designing a physical product or service. To clarify, when designing a stand, the marketing personnel of the product to be launched must clarify what market segment the product will enter so that right kind of design can be produced.

Repo (1999,37) states the starting-point analyses are fundamental parts of successful launching (Figure 4). This includes the company analyses that unclog what recourses the company has and what needs to be acquired. The

competitor analysis finds out if the competitors' products are negative or positive compared to their own product.

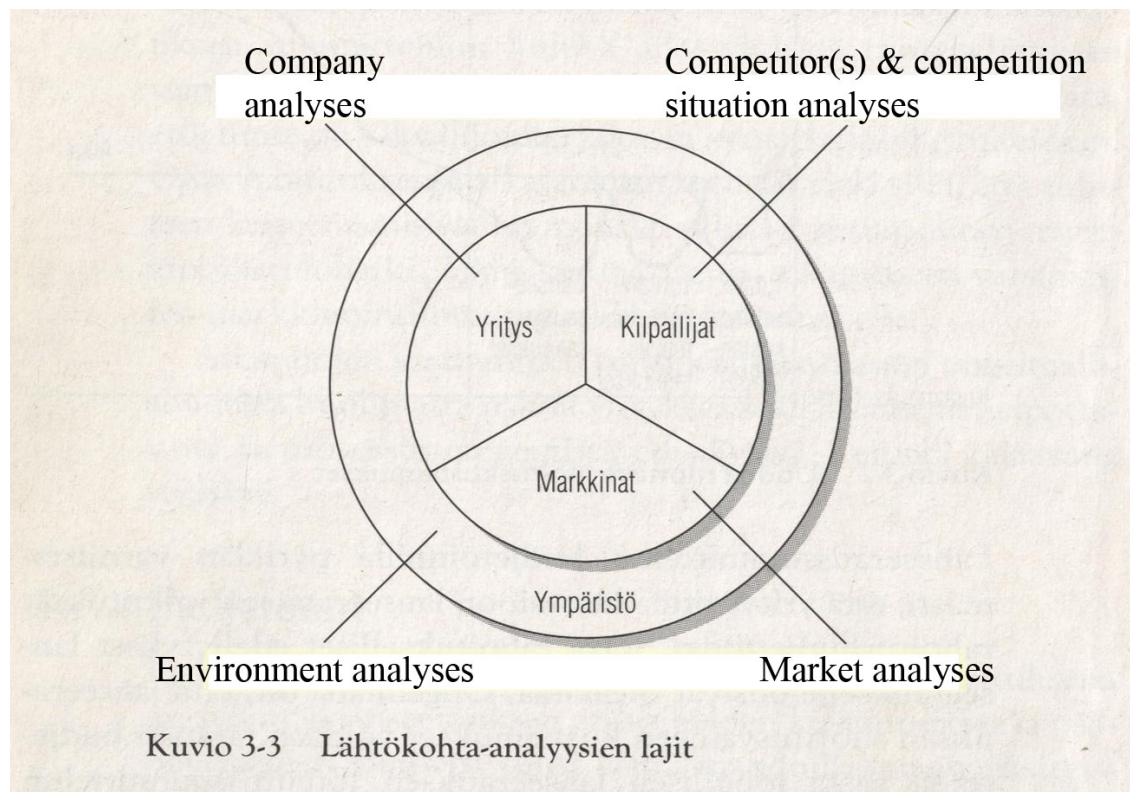


Figure 4. Starting-point analyses segments (Source: Rope 1999, 38. Translation: Kaasinen).

The potential markets and future views will be reviewed in the market analyses. This includes the size and state of the existing market, if it is new, growing or at the end of its life span and also how the market is located and structured (Figure 5). Environment analyses including economic, technologic, law and behavior future views are often forgotten. These are difficult to predict, but when analyzed correctly, they can bring large market shares and advantages towards the competitors.



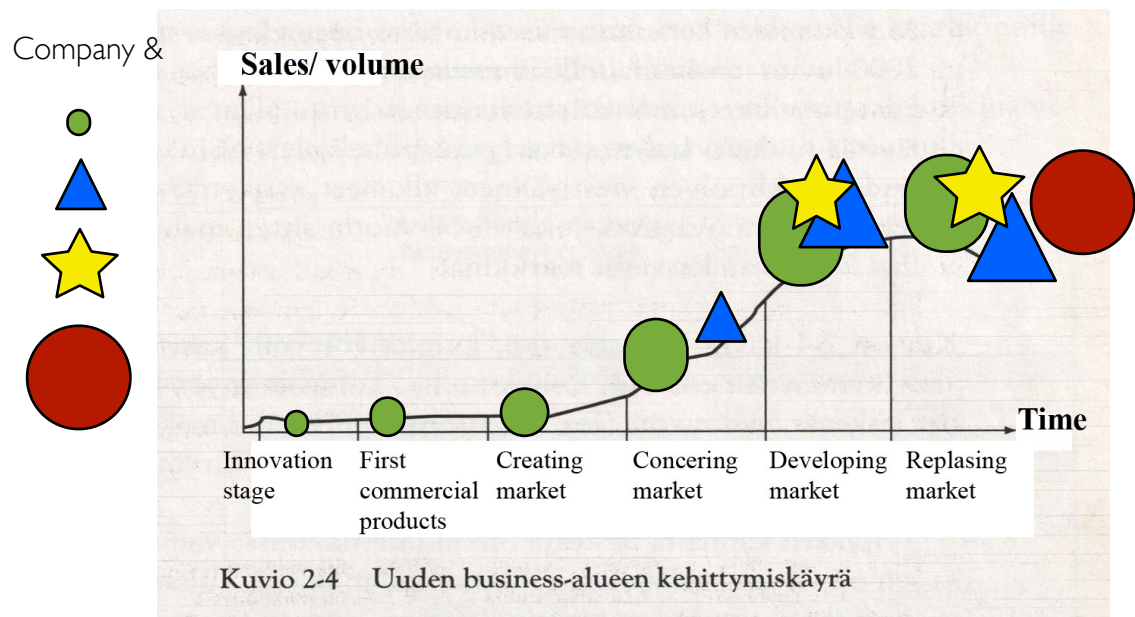


Figure 5. New business segment's development life span. (Source: Rope 1999, 25. Modified Kaasinen).

According to Rope (1999, 42) the timing when entering a market and with what volume needs are both considered extremely important. After competitors have created a concerning market segment, (Figure 4) the company can enter with small volume and become anything from a critical challenger to a predominant competitor with a successful product (Figure 6). If the market segment already exists as a developing market, entering requires large market shares and volume to create a better product than that of the competitors who already have experience in the field. The closer to the end of the new business segment's life spans market entry occurs, the harder it is to compete with companies who already have loyal customers and a known brand. Plasthill Oy's launch is located among the first commercial products to concerning markets depending on the way the markets and competitors are defined. There are no competitors with the same material, but a few companies are using a similar combination of wood or bamboo plastics. The customer base is furthermore small.



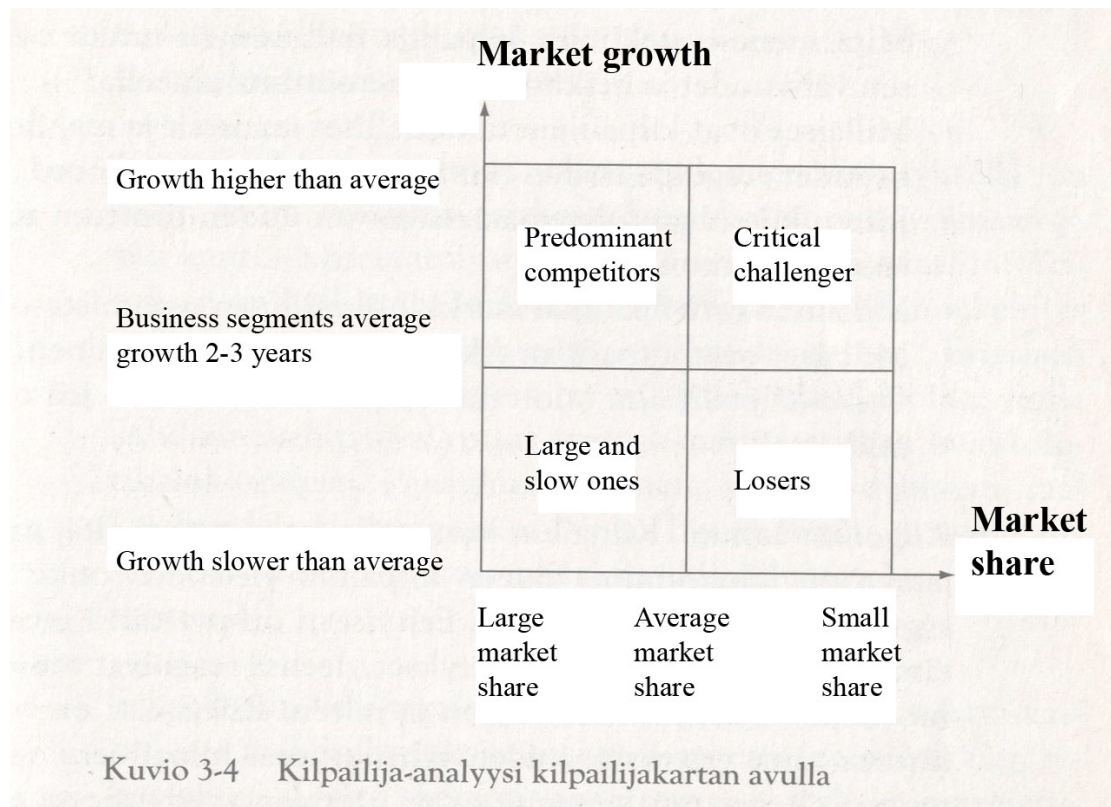


Figure 6. Competitor analysis chart. Source: (Rope 1999, 43).

How does launching differ from product design? As Rope (1999, 21) states the product development is the base requirement for launching. Product development enables the product that fills needed requirements and launching then brings the product successfully to the market. In launching one already has the product but not customers; in product design one has customers without a product. In both cases one might not have seen the end user of the future product. That is why varying from the case certain research must be done. However, the same terms apply to both; first one needs to define to whom one is designing, whether it is one's employer or the future end user, one needs to determine the age, wealth, situation in life; married, kids, hobbies etc. The more one thinks beforehand, the easier it will be to design later on. Furthermore, defining the goals and time to reach them measures how much time can be used on each stage of the project.

### 3.1 Personal experiences about the product launch

Pre-knowledge about product launch, launching marketing and advertising is mainly based on a single exhibitor experience from 2010, at Milan Design Week. For Biennale Milan, I designed and created a chair that was exhibited on a stand designed and created together with Glasgow Caledonian University. Visits to furniture fairs in Finland, for example Habitare, Design Week in Milan and a furniture fair in Stockholm. Moreover an Oy Plastex AB business fair cruise provided understanding about the whole fair culture. A culture with different branding and design points out variations within different fairs in Europe, from a simple, modest, and honest North to a more aggressive and lifestyle based Middle Europe.

What is shown in the consumer goods fairs one day will be in the shops the next year. It is difficult to know beforehand what will attract customers in the future. Weak trends can be seen by looking to the past. Green thinking has become more popular every year, especially after the nuclear power catastrophe in Japan, as well as poisons floating and polluting rivers in Europe. These catastrophes remind people of how fragile nature is. Furthermore, after recovering from the global economic depression, there is or will be more money to spend and to choose where and on what to spend the money on. Post natural catastrophe time, it is suitable to launch a product that has the eco label. It is problematic to represent Plasthill's product Kaarna so that all of its qualities will be noticed and understood to get people's interest.

Knowing the customer company through family ties gives an advantage to understand the customer needs behind the words. Knowing the company's working habit, from the representatives and steering group Arja Kaasinen, Esa Kaasinen and Michael Negele, honest feedback concerning design can be expected. Customers give quite free hands to start designing the 15 square meter stand with a floor plan. This can be seen as an opportunity but also requires limiting one's own ideas to be able to finish work on time. Personal challenges are self-management and effective purposeful communication with the company representatives. Communication with Plasthill Oy is on a daily

basis to get opinions, answers to question for finishing design and orders, or making corrections to the design as soon as possible.

Depending on the short project time, all the stand materials and everything that must come to the stand will have to be bought and produced locally in the Joensuu area to save time for transportation. The knowledge acquired about the companies for this project needed in Joensuu was poor. This means research about the possibilities how and where to produce different elements needs to be done. Budget for the stand design and realization will be discussed later on.

The lack of stand design, branding and advertising experience should not show on the final layout. To assure the project's success, contact persons to help to evaluate the work must be found and used to gather valuable feedback, also outside the company to get different point of views.

#### **4 DESIGN PROCESS**

To understand the possibilities in Kaarna and Kupilka presented on the stand, the products need to be explored more closely to be able to see a hidden value in them. Why would this product be better than some other? This process is part of the branding already started among the web pages of [www.plasthill.fi/kaarna](http://www.plasthill.fi/kaarna) (Figure 7). According to the customer, the stand must represent the ideology and atmosphere shown on the product web pages. This limitation functions as a guideline when designing the layout and elements for the fair. The design must take into account the strict timetable that allows only two and a half months of effective working time to finish the stand and order the delivery to send the materials to the exhibition place in Frankfurt. After the Ambiente Fair, there is time to think through what parts of the design were successful and what parts need further development, and lastly if there are any other factors to be considered in the future.

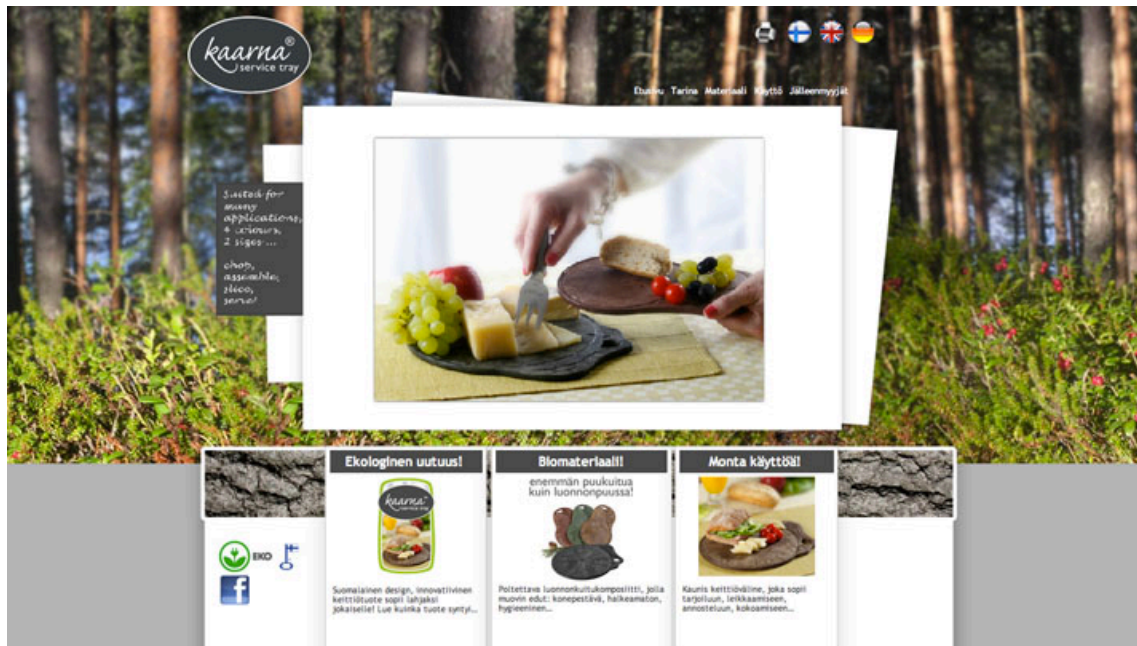


Figure 7. Case product Kaarna web pages.

The stand target group, product qualities, functionality of the element for the stand, employer and self management are issues that require paying a great amount of attention to during the whole designing process. Since all the previous objects are connected, failing in one part of the project leads to a failure of the entire project.

It is worth mentioning that the Ambiente Fair is one of the largest consumer goods fair in the world, with almost 4,500 exhibitors and close to 145,000 visitors in 2011 (Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH 2011). It is essential to notice that the fair is not open to the public, but only to exhibitors, retailers, and distributors. This is also the current target group to whom the design must be done. The scale of the fair will also lead to the fact that the visitors are seeing it one or two times. That is why the design must grab attention at once. More specifically, it is aimed at the target group of the stand to whom the design will be done. The target group includes male and female retailers, distributors, or wholesalers aged most likely 25-60. They are active in business life and know what they want. Marital status, kids, or hobbies should not matter in this business environment.

The material of the exhibit product Kaarna is a special nature fiber composite and so more ecological option using leftovers from the Finnish wood industry. Extra value is added to the fact that material is made with green electricity. The product is certified for food in Finland and is safe to dish wash and it won't release toxins when disposed of or recycled. The company, material and product are all located in Finland in the same facilities. Lisa Sounio, who has been working in the product department of highly successful international companies such as Marimekko and Iittala, claims these product factors must be shown and advertised on the stand considerably.

“If produced in Finland the method of producing and the producer have to make an interesting and transparent part of the story of the product. Many brands already tell who has made the product. The name of the producer on a sticker alone is not enough: you have to give a face to the production” (Sounio 2010, 49).

Sounio (2010) also highlights the importance of being positive and surprising: this equals creativity in advertising, which requires no large investments. This will catch people's attention, according to her experience. How to be creative then when it is one's time to design?

It is important to also make sure the solutions done will work in the fair. The elements must be fast to construct and they must be durable enough to last until the fair is finished. All material sent for the fair must also fit into a pellet without breaking at any point. The pellet also limits the height of the elements to 250 cm. These limitations come from the fair organizer and cannot be changed.

The employer's requirements should never take complete control over the project. The employer wants to have the best possible solution but will not always be willing to pay for it. Self-management must work. Meaning goals are defined, time management works, self-evaluation controls the learning process, and any corrections to be made. For example favoring certain design models when it is certainly more realistic to produce on time than the more “desirable option”.

The purchased space was 15 m<sup>3</sup> in a corner place with two open walls. The walls were 2.5 m high at this fair hall. It was important to consider how people would be attracted to the space and enter it. The location of the stand towards the corridor and the location in the fair hall and in the fair area in general also required consideration. It is good to mention that the Ambiente Fair comprises eleven large halls for exhibition space. This abundant fair area highlights the meaning of the single fair stand.

The whole color scheme of the stand was supposed to be connected to the style on the Kaarna web pages. It was important to get an earthy, cozy, and mystic yet still a valuable and fresh feeling. The main colors from the webpages that should be used in some form are light and dark grey, rustic red, conifer green and light green. Due to time constraints, the lights were ordered from the organizer of Ambiente.

#### **4.1 Realization**

The realization started in mid-November immediately after receiving employment from Plasthill Oy. Working with the project started with getting familiar with the subject by defining the goals and the deadlines as well as agreeing with the employer on how the communication would be taken care of. The agreed goal was to make a stand that represents the same atmosphere that exists on the Kaarna webpages with the final deadline being the fair in February. In practice, this meant agreeing that everything must be ready to send two weeks before the Ambiente Fair. This would give some free time in case something in preparation would not go according.

The basic information was followed through the realization of the project plan schedule. In the design stage, the first research about the fair construction was conducted. Interior designer Maija Kärkinen showed one way of designing a space with three stages. Since instructions came from a professional, I decided to follow them.

Other information to help the design was gathered from browsing the Internet and looking at different designs and design researches. My own experience from exhibiting and visiting fairs was also helpful. Seeing a large variety of different fairs provided the perspective to see what can be done to begin designing the fair stand. The variety of literature on launching a product or fair stand design from the libraries or in the e library of North Karelia University of Applied Sciences in Joensuu was poor.

To understand a phenomenon like branding, it was essential to find the importance to highlight in this fair stand when there is new product on display. From the onset my opinion has been that Finnish atmosphere with its nature and cleanness needs to be highlighted. As Sounio (2010) claimed, soul, history, and feeling are important parts of the international as well as Finnish design. Her *Bränding* book was useful by understanding creative advertising and giving tools to achieve an original stand.

To be able to present the product in an understandable and trustworthy way, one must study the way eco issues are presented to customers from the *Eco Design Book* (2002). The book showed that page layout can bring about a huge difference to the product descriptive and image. For example, the book cites eco products that were not especially ecologically friendly. One chair that shows this to be true is a chair that was said to be made from recycled polypropylene. Since most of the plastics are or can be partly recycled on the production process anyhow, the book did not clarify why this recycling was more ecological. Therefore this book was misleading. A person who would know less about plastic production would have never questioned this. Therefore the book shows what power advertisements and marketing has on people and how one has to be careful not to mislead customers. This is something I also had to consider when designing the stand.

To obtain desired results, it was necessary to start thoughtfully. Firstly, this included talking to the company members and finding out what they really

wanted. Then, finding out what they liked and if they had any previous experiences of the similar realization and what the limitations were, if any. Cooperation was constant with the company members. Maija Kärkinen's instructions were used as a guideline.

#### **4.2 Three stages for creating the stand**

According to Kärkinen's stages, one should firstly find out the budget and the company's values as well as the message they want to show. Mind-mapping the existing and desired image of the material, product and company helped the first stage. Next came researching different stand solutions and themes from the Internet and libraries. Previous knowledge and pictures from the Milano Design Fair helped to get familiar with the possible solutions.

In the second stage one should create a floor plan, sketches with color schemes and the right atmosphere. According to that, four different options of the stand to show to the company members were created. Each was from a different starting point of view and feeling. To get the right direction with the design to continue, the individual employer's opinions and comments were taken into consideration.

In the first option the idea was to create a dreamlike Nordic winter feeling to differentiate from other companies at the Ambiente Fair (Figure 8). With use of felt, light colors, smooth, and weird forms, one can get an illusion of a different world. The photographic view from Pyytivaara Hill gives a feeling of one being somewhere in a high place.





Figure 8. Option 1.

The aim of the second option was to create an earthy familiar and welcoming yet clean outcome (Figure 9). This would happen using crass green carpet and logs as a table and showing pictures of a tree on the wall along with some earthy music or scent. Presenting products on a white Kaarna-product shaped low stand would bring the products well on display.

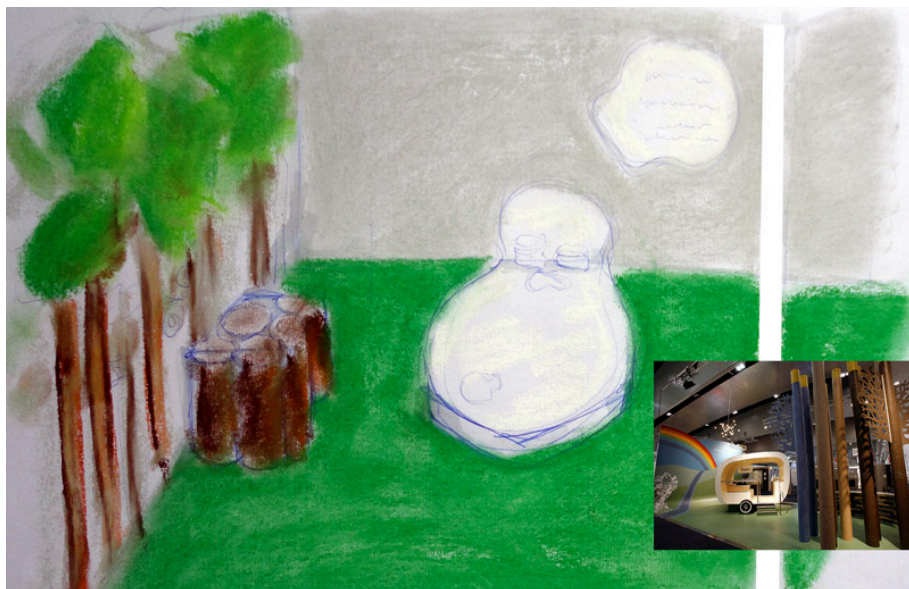


Figure 9. Option 2.

For the third option, the intention was to give a total different point of view for the stand (Figure 10). A clean, simple, spacious, and posh atmosphere can be achieved by using only black, white, and one effect color; straight lines and integrating table to the elements.



Figure 10. Option 3.

The fourth option was the wild card. This was going to be something fun, surprising, and not according to the webpages but something those employers might still have wanted (Figure 11). The idea was to create a dark forest with some wooden benches with a colorful or other way eye catching big display in the middle for the products. The dark forest and grey ground was because they would highlight any color in the middle.

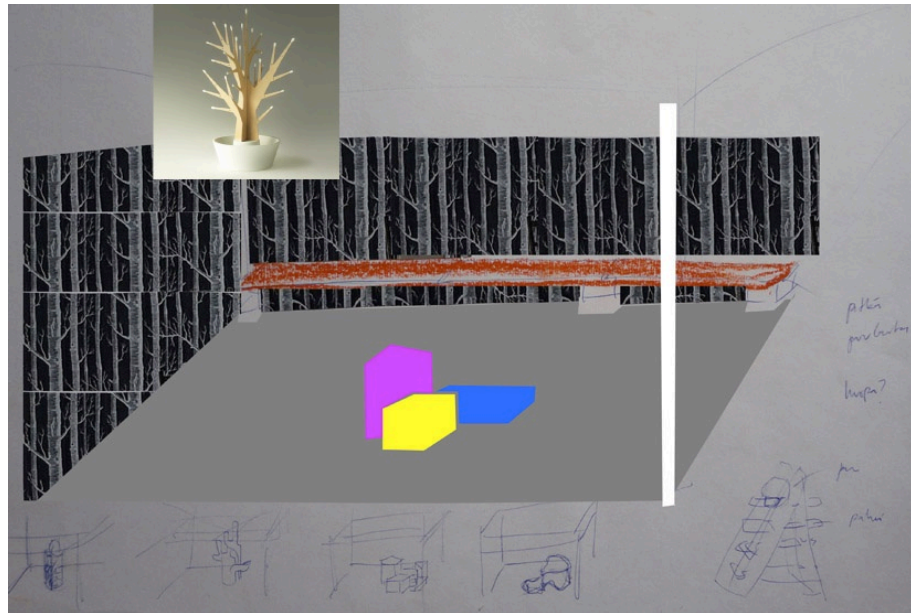


Figure 11. Option 4.

From these options, together with the employer, the last solution was gathered. In the final version there would be the view of the Pyytiavaara on the wall. The standing display would be from option three with the Kaarna low stand element and color scheme from option two. After discussion, a new suggestion with using these wanted elements but modifying them to create a harmonic ensemble was created.

After readying the stand layout suitable a functional standing product display had to be designed according to the drawings. Plasthill Oy wanted the display to be not only a prototype but the final display to be used in the shops. The display should have also been easily assembled and work as a package for the products when transported. Many solutions had to be tested to get the best functional outcome (Figure 12). Not only the function but the outlook as well had to be designed in three dimensions. There were several looks designed from which the best one was chosen (Figure 13). After finding the solutions and testing them, it was time to contact the company that could produce it. Despite the lack of package or display design, the experience solution would have been easily produced, but not in the given time. Together with the company representative from KM-Yhtymä, Suomen painotuote, a simpler solution was agreed to which an extra model was drawn (Second image in Figure 13).

Despite the new solutions there was no time to manufacture the Kaarna display on time. This led to the fact that at the fair, only the prototypes would be displayed.



Figure 12. Product display prototypes.



Figure 13. Product display models.

For stage three I created a real sized Rhinoceros model about the designed stand (Figure 14). Using the model, I tried different interior solutions for the last time, for example changing the height of the wall photo, the locations of the two displays and Kaarna table element as well as combining different floor and wall colors to find best available solution. All the required logos and their size and location were agreed upon together with the company owner to avoid any mistakes with this delicate issue.



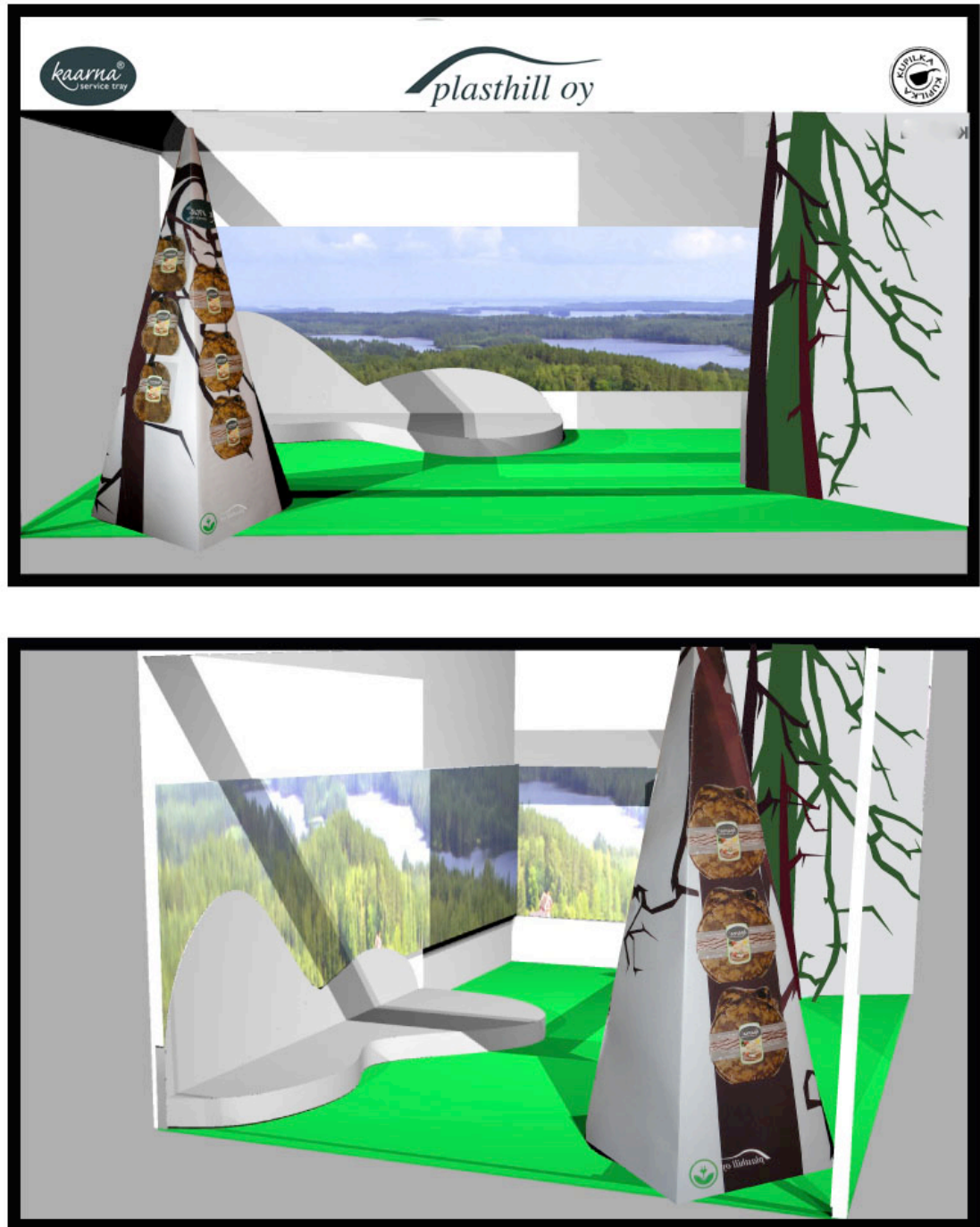


Figure 14. Rhinoceros model of the stand.

To gain a different perspective for the design during the design process, I had also been communicating with Pirjo-Helena Repo from the advertising agency Adelen. Repo had been working in different projects with Plasthill and was willing to help the thesis process by giving feedback and valuable knowledge about materials and the companies that could print some of the elements.

When the employer was satisfied with the outcomes of the overall look (Figure 14), it was time to start ordering the elements from companies around Joensuu as well as ordering the stand frame with lights, floor and walls with chosen color from the fair organizer. After ordering the stand elements concentration could be focused on the materials given at the fair. First the Kaarna brochure background was updated and then business cards could be designed for everyone presenting at the fair to complete the whole stand look and experience. Quite the same terms applied when designing the business cards as for the stand with only difference that the natural fiber composite must somehow obviously stand out on the card. After trying different solutions, the best solution was chosen to be ordered (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Kaarna business card front and back

The final Plasthill Oy stand at the Ambiente Fair 11-15 February 2011 was assembled by me, and Michael Negele, the other exhibitor (Figure 16). The stand had all the planned elements to gather visitors' attention every day from 9 a.m.-6 p.m except on the last day until 5 p.m. The Plasthill Oy stand was

located next to the fair's metro entrance. This location turn out to be a positive experience for the product launching with plenty of visitors passing by and entering the stand.



Figure16. Stand from Ambiente with the author and Michael Negele.

The details on the Plasthill Oy stand in Ambiente completed the look. Sentences form the word Kaarna with light green color and describe the feeling Kaarna gives when holding on to the product (Figure 17). Collet completes the edge of the holes cut for the products to be placed to “hang” on the tree branches (Figure 17). The five meter long stand was well-used by the employers and exhibitors to create new contacts and improve old customer relationships (Figure 18). Decoration and muffin makes Kaarna look even more delicious (Figure 18).





Figure 17. Kaarna element text, Wall element



Figure 18. Stand side view, Detail



### 4.3 Materials

In the final layout there were three different elements on the stand all made from different materials carefully chosen to suit the purpose in the best possible way. The requirements for the materials were the time limit, costs, and functionality. The advisable overall look for the whole design was to appear natural and modest. By choosing matte instead of shiny surface elements for the stand, the illusion of the required easily approached look was achieved.

It was important to consider that the Kaarna element would have to hold the weight of ten Kaarna sets meaning around ten kilos. The wall part for the Kaarna element was made from the same 2 mm aluminum strengthened material to combine the overall look. To be able to have organic form on the element, it needed to be water jet cut. The correct material was chosen together with the producer to avoid mistakes caused by my lack of experience. The supporting parts were two stable and affordable wood planks crossed in two different sizes bought from a hardware store. A widely supporting pedestal would prevent the Kaarna element without bending under the full weight load. To cover the sides of the Kaarna element, a bamboo matt was cut to shape. The same color paper as the element was printed and used to cover the bamboo mat. To attach the side to the element, I used metal corner pieces and hot glue. The side form was too organic to be produced professionally on time and would have cost a great amount. The side was not a supporting part or closely looked at; therefore, by using common sense the side was done exceptionally by myself.

The L-shaped wall element was best to make from one of the 10 mm thick plastic shell board because it is light and stays well strait. Both the Kaarna element and the L-shaped wall element materials were chosen after discussing with the personnel from company Kopijyvä Oy, since they would do the printing and they had a long term material knowledge. After printing, the holes were cut in the Plasthill Oy and edges were completed.

The panorama view was made from 6 1000 mm wide photo printed fabric banderols. To be able to do this, the chosen photo had to be significantly enlarged. This on the other hand created a smooth outcome that would be pleasant to look at. The banderols were also printed at Kopijyvä Oy.

The advertising agency Axoli Oy realized two standing prototype displays for the products as exact for the design as possible. The material for the prototypes was capaboard, which the agency was familiar with and was thereby able to produce prototypes on time.

The business cards were ordered through the advertising agency, Adelen, who had been ordering brochures before for Plasthill Oy. Since the tight schedule it was important to use trustworthy contacts if possible to avoid any delays or mistakes in orders.

#### **4.4 Factors that arose during the process**

At the start I knew the schedule would be really tight considering the Christmas and New Year holidays were between the projects. The company from whom I first ordered the display was unable to do, so an emergency solution was chosen by showing a prototype of the display on the fair. This option was in the end a better solution than not showing a display at all.

In the company from where some of the elements were ordered, a machine failure caused some colors to distort. Since there were only a few days left I decided it was best to cut both wall elements and the display the needed forms myself to make sure everything were ready on time. The decision turned out to be right since printing took slightly longer than expected.

One interesting factor that I knew beforehand but what was highlighted during the process was the importance of accurate work and in what form one saves, packs and sends files to be produced. Based on this project, one cannot be too exact in these manners.

The hangers on the side of the wall element turned out to be quite fragile. That was something that should have been tested more thoughtfully beforehand. When taking down the stand we were waiting about from six in the evening for three hours to finish packing, because the fair organizers had lost Plasthill's pellet

## 5. FEEDBACK

To be able to learn from mistakes and succeeded parts going through the project is vital. Questions for example what was the most consequential factors influencing to the launching success? What areas were successful and what went wrong? What factors weren't considered or were miss evaluated beforehand? What was left undone? Why? If done something differently now what would it be? (Repo 1999, 252)

Repo (1999) writes about evaluation of the whole launching process from a marketing perspective. The same terms apply to the design part of the launch, since questions are common to the projects in general true, according to my experience.

### 5.1 Questionnaire for Plasthill Oy

Taking into account the employer's opinion was vital to find out how the goals were met and what negatives and positives were on the designed work. A paper questionnaire (Appendix 1) gives more time, meaning more thoughtful answers than an oral questionnaire. In this feedback, the goal was to get as trustful feedback as possible to be able to utilize information on the next questionnaire done to find out improvements for the future.

The questionnaire was for the employer's managing director Esa Kaasinen, the finance & administration responsible Arja Kaasinen and Michael Negele, responsible for marketing. They all gave similar feedback on the fair stand design and success. Overall they thought about the stand that it was stylish and simple and that the products were displayed uniquely. The stand also differentiated from other stands, according to the responses.

When talking about achieving goals all three answered yes, the stand fully represents the products and [plasthill.fi/kaarna](http://plasthill.fi/kaarna) values and layout. The outcome was also seen surprisingly similar to the original suggestion made before the realization of the stand.

When asked about the positives and negatives, similar feedback was given as to what was realized at the fair. The stand should have more so highlighted the ecological factor and the fact that product and company comes from Finland. The metal hooks on the side of the wall element were also too fragile to hold the products in constant use. Positive feedback was that the whole ensemble was well presented with professional design outcome.

The company also thought the design gave more value and made the stand more interesting. The layout of the stand also supported the Kaarna product launch according to Michael Negele (questionnaire for Plasthill Oy 2011) “I would say that it attracted a high amount of potential customers--Therefore, it supported the launch during the Ambiente Trade Show.” Esa Kaasinen (questionnaire for Plasthill Oy 2011) commented “Yes, it supported, it made Plasthill known and brought interest towards the products as well as towards the material”.

All three would also prefer a private designer to design the stand instead of stand builders. The reason for this can also be in the budget, which not one of the respondents was willing to invest more than what was put in to Ambiente 2011. Yet everyone would be willing to use and budget a designer’s services again in some other fairs in the future.

## **5.2 Questionnaire for international students**

Advisable productive and useful work for the employer includes creating a functional stand as well as a plan of improvements presented for future stand layouts. To figure out the required advancements for the stand layout, a

questionnaire based on the feedback from the employer and from Ambiente Fair visitors must be done. The questionnaire based on the given feedback will permit testing the functionality and meaning of the feedback with a real example.

Since I was working on the stand as an exhibitor, I had the privilege to gather feedback from the fair by observation and in the conversations. Mainly visitors in Ambiente were wondering what the material was and was it really as ecological as the company states. People were really interested: almost everyone at least looked for a longer period at the stand, and most of the people came to ask or look more closely. From the behavior I can make the assumption that whether it was only the material or the product or some combination, I managed to design a stand that caught the visitors' interest. One retailer from Germany gave constructive feedback when saying the stand should have shown better that the company's products are Finnish and ecological. In my questionnaire for the employer, the same observations were made. This questionnaire for international students was done to observe can earlier gathered knowledge be adapted successfully into the stand and what corrections for the next stand should be made. The presumption is that it would be better to advertise being eco-friendly and from Finland more than in the stand presented in Ambiente.

Based on this, a model of four different stands was created with everyone testing different reactions. This was shown as a Powerpoint presentation after giving the questioning form to fill out. I advised to first concentrate only on the questions and to answer as soon as seeing the options. The time given for each picture was short in order to assure the adjectives used would be spontaneous. At the end, options from first to the last were on the same slide to remind respondents. The first option tested if highlighting the mentioned products were from Finland made any difference. The second option was the stand layout presented at the fair to be able to compare the questionnaire results to the existing option. The third option highlighted the fact that the product was eco-friendly and from Finland. Since the Plasthill stand appearance was quite calm

and simple in the Ambiente Fair, the changes to the different options one to three were kept small. The fourth option tested what the reaction would be if the highlighted factors would be more dominant at the stand.

Since the stand was made for the international markets the questionnaire also had to be directed at an international audience. Due to cultural differences, Finnish people would on average answer to possibly prefer different marketing solutions than a group consisting of many nationalities. To get many nationalities, a sample questionnaire was made at a joint lecture consisting of first year international business and industrial design students studying in English as the language of instruction. This was possible with the collaboration of North Karelia University of Applied Sciences. From all 30-35 students, 24 answered the questionnaire presented on 26.9 2011. The date was set for then since the time was available for the lecturers to present my questionnaire.

To get spontaneous reactions to the questionnaire's first question, the purpose was to write down an adjective that best describes the stand (Appendix 2). From all the answers, option 1 (Figure 19) was most often described as natural and clear; both answered three times. Other adjectives included peaceful, conservative and convenient.

1



Figure 19. First stand layout option for questionnaire.

“Simple” was answered five times from the 24 applicants and “grey” four times to the second option (Figure 20). “Green”, “modern” and “natural” were answered to describe the exhibited option.

## 2



Figure 20. Second stand layout option for questionnaire.



Four answered “eco” or “green” for the third option (Figure 21) and a few described the option as “Finnish” - simple and easy to understand.

### 3



Figure 21. Third stand layout option for questionnaire.

The fourth option (Figure 22) was the only option gathering negative adjectives. Three participants answered that the stand was too busy, green or too informative. The adjectives “aggressive” and “confusing” but also “modern” and “futuristic” were mentioned. The fourth option gathered the greatest variety of opinions.

# 4



Figure 22. Fourth stand layout option for questionnaire.

Analyzing the feedback from the questionnaire from the international students revealed interesting factors. Simple words such as “Eco products from Finland” would attract 46% of all the questionnaire participants to enter to the stand (Figure 23). The adjectives describing the reasons for entering to the stand were informative, being eco and most welcoming. Second and third place to enter were option 2 (25%) and option 1 with 21%. The reason for entering to the stand was the professional look, simplicity, and clearness. Surprisingly, the aggressive fourth option would be entered by only two persons.

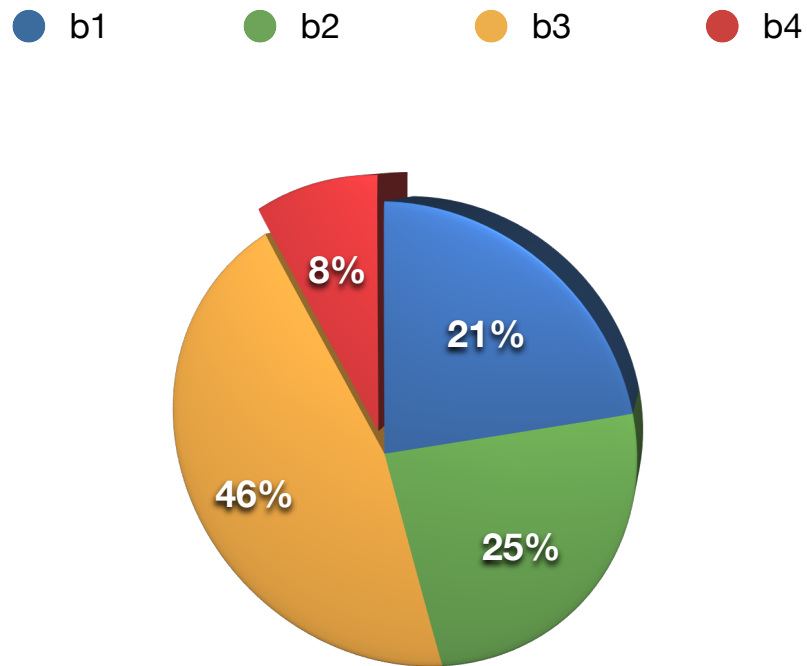


Figure 23. Which stand would you enter?

Incomparably most of the participants, 61%, would buy a product from the third option leaving others far behind with less than 17% (Figure 24). The reasons for the success included professionalism and a clear ecological outcome.

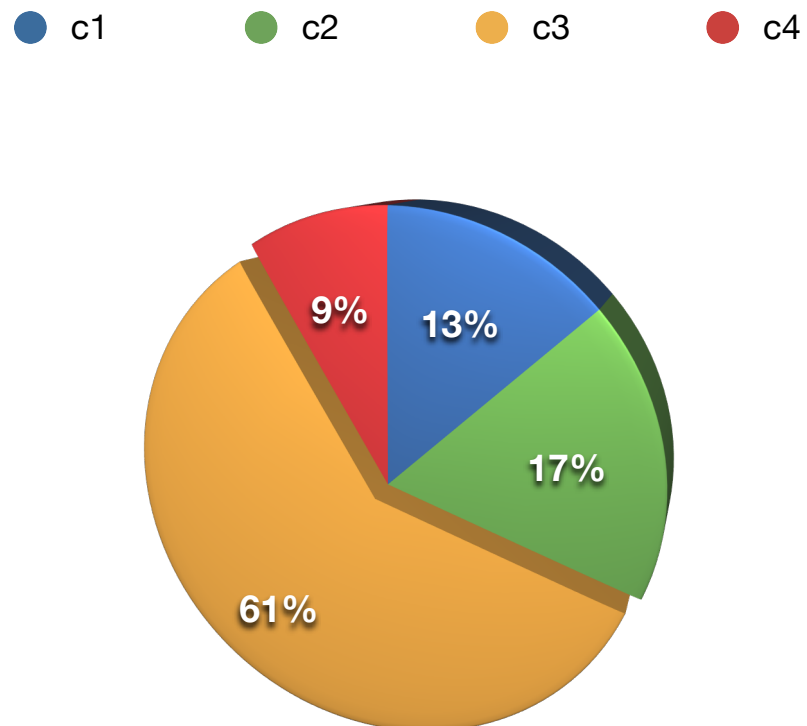


Figure 24. From where would you buy a product?

The product seen as eco-friendly did not clearly affect a lot of the buying behavior. Both the original stand with no text and third option with eco from Finland text were both seen almost as ecological with only a 10% difference (Figure 25). Clearly, the majority would buy a product from option three (Figure 24). This raises a question as to whether or not the advertisement from Finland convinced the possible customers or did just having some information clearly on display get people's trust or made them more interested?

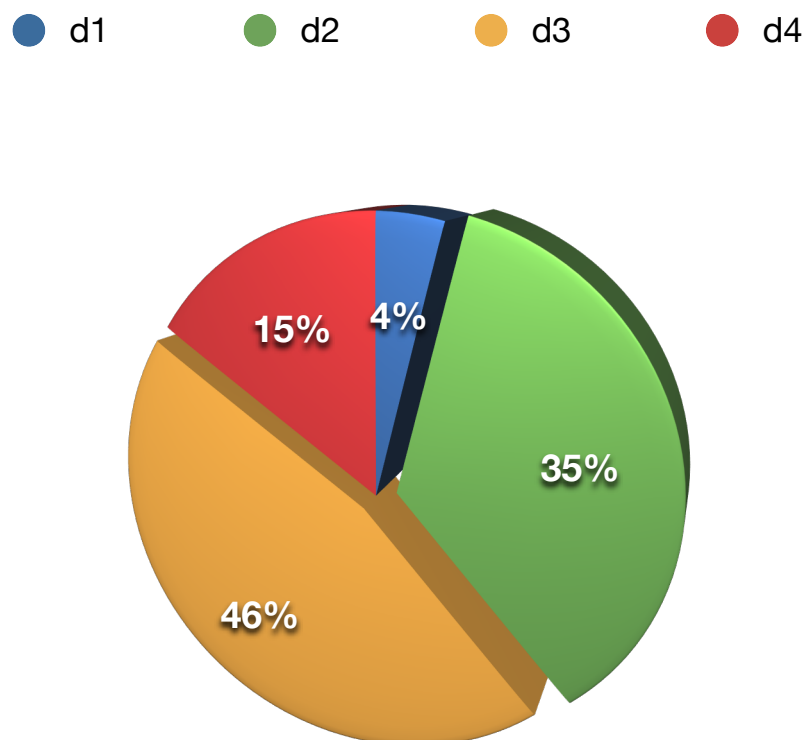


Figure 25. Which stand looks most eco-friendly?

Another interesting factor was that catching attention can be also negative and a useless way of trying to get customers entering or buy products from the stand. This can be clarified with Figure 26, where no one thought option 1 would catch attention yet 13% would be willing to buy a product from the same stand. Likewise, both option 4 and 3 got 38% of the responses of being noticeable but only nine percent would buy a product from the stand 4 (picture 24).

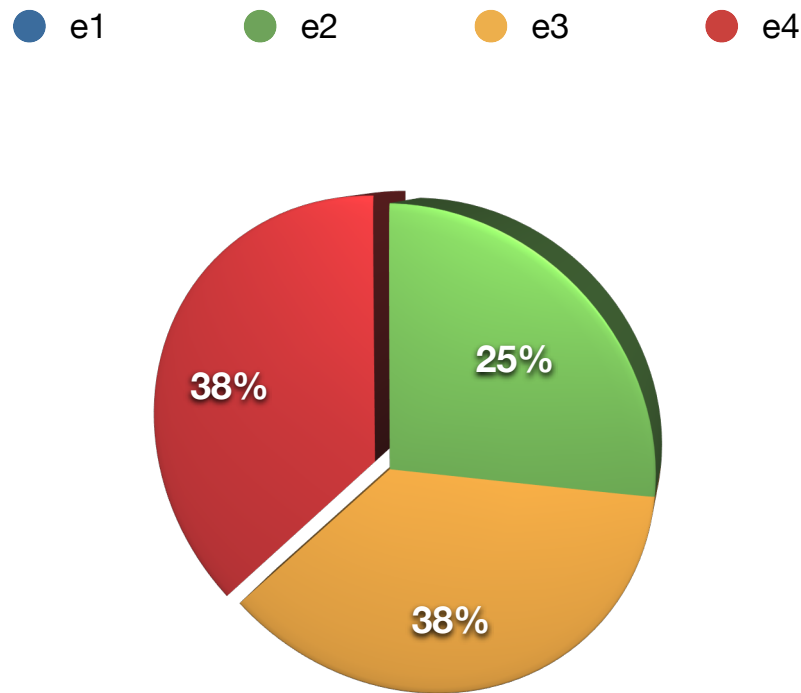


Figure 26. Which stand catches your attention the most?

Overall, 47% of the questionnaire participants answered from all the questions that option three would be the best solution (Figure 27). The result was expected and confirmed the feedback about the improvements suggested to be done by the fair visitors and employer. The stand presented on the fair got 26% and was the second popular choice among the answers. This can be seen that the stand showed at the Ambiente Fair was fairly successful but required some major improvements for better success. These improvements are according to the questionnaire showing informative text on the wall. The eco-friendly product from the Finland text was a functional solution for this stand, but if the stand layout will be changed, the text should be rethought. Another factor to be remembered is that even though the stand needs to be informative, avoiding negative reactions can be difficult. The challenging solution number four reached 18% as being extremely informative, but at the end the stand with a wall full of text would work against itself being the attention catcher yet raising a negative reaction. This stand raised the most diverse reactions from being modern to stuffy.

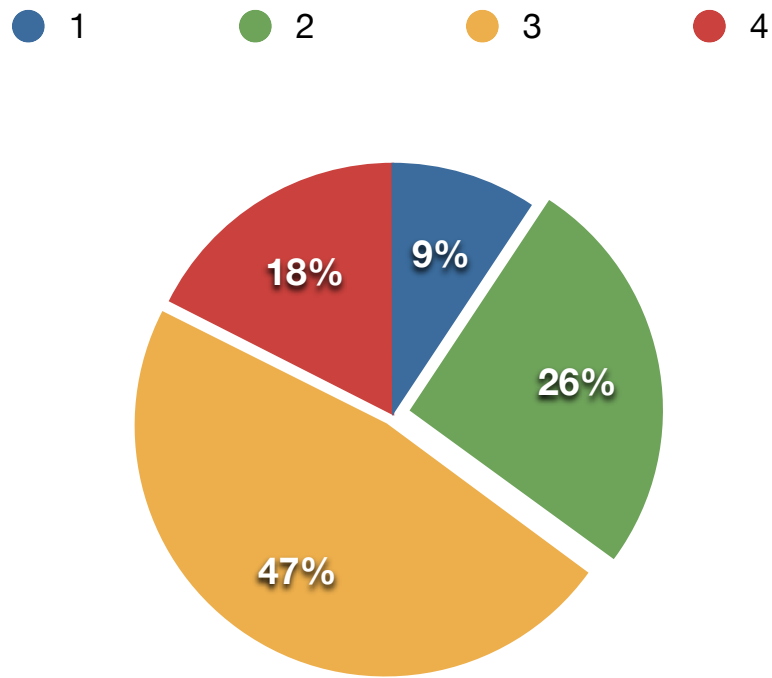


Figure 27. Overall preferred option percentage.

## 6. CONCLUSION

When analyzing the feedback from the employer, it can be said that the project was completed on time, within the given budget, and the employer was satisfied with the results. The stand gave extra, desired value to the company. The project can be said to be successful with these terms. More than managing a large project with multiple tasks, this project gave me an understanding of the working life in the design environment from the international launching point of view. Learning how to behave, who to contact, and how to proceed were all outcomes. This included for example when contacting a new company to order materials or answering business mails. Agreeing on the spending for each element with both the producer and the employer gave me a great amount of knowledge about the costs and the value of money.

The fact that one should work as early as possible before the deadline cannot be highlighted enough, especially when having the start of the project on an extremely tight schedule. I was lucky that the employers were understanding

and allowed time for decision making when needed so that the project proceeded without breaks. Furthermore, the companies from whom materials were ordered were inevitably willing to collaborate within Plasthill Oy's short deadline.

Whether designing a stand or improving a brand, one should always remember to communicate with the employer but not get run over by demands. The designer should always have a clear view of the final outcome to be able to achieve a wanted result. With self-management this project was finalized.

Since the Kaarna product was not familiar to anyone, certain factors were logically brought up in the questionnaire. Feedback from the international students confirmed that in the future design for launching a new product, the stand should be slightly more informative than the created stand to convince people to enter. However, the questionnaire for the students must be taken into account only as a guideline since for example in the Ambiente Fair visitors were and will be exhibitors, retailers, and wholesalers, and they might thereby react differently to the asked questions.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1, Questionary for Plasthill Oy

Appendix 2, Questionary for international students



## Appendix 1:

### 1. Surprising factor

a) First image about the stand/ what was the focus you remember?

b) Why did it stay on your mind?

### 2. Achieving goals

a) Did the stand represent the products and [plasthill.fi](http://plasthill.fi)/kaarna values?

b) Did the stand represent the products and [plasthill.fi](http://plasthill.fi)/kaarna layout?

c) What were the positives/negatives?

### 3. Worth the investment?

a) Did the design give more value or make the stand more interesting?

b) Did the layout of the stand support the Kaarna product launch?

c) Was the budget suitable?

### 4. Future

a) Would you order the stand design and realization the next time from the fair stand design company/ design office or would you organize the stand internally?

b) How much would you be willing to invest for the next fair compared to this one?

Appendix 2:

a) Write down an adjective that describes each stand layout.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

b) Which stand would you enter? (circle)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Why?

c) From where would you buy a product?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Why?

d) Which stand looks most eco friendly ?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

e) Which stand catches your attention the most?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.